

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5918

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 26606

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SREF, CB, TH

SUBJECT: IN TAM'S VIEWS ON CAMBODIA

REF: A. BANGKOK 26500 - B. BANGKOK 25648 - C. BANGKOK 15352

D. FBIS OW272135Y NOV 75

SUMMARY: IN TAM DISCUSSES CAMBODIA TODAY, INCLUDING RESISTANCE, AS WELL AS HIS OWN POSITION. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIOR TO FORMER GKR PRIME MINISTER IN TAM'S DEPARTURE FOR FRANCE DECEMBER 22 WITH 14 (VICE 22 REPORTED REF A) MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY, EMBOFFS CALLED ON HIM TO BID HIM FAREWELL AND DISCUSS CAMBODIA. HE WAS IN GENERALLY GOOD FRAME OF MIND, SADDENED BY NEED TO SPLIT UP HIS FAMILY.

2. HIS ACTIVITIES. IN TAM CLAIMED THAT RECENT RTG ATTACKS ON HIM TO THE EFFECT THAT HIS MEN HAVE BEEN STIRRING UP THE BORDER SITUATION ARE COMPLETELY WITHOUT FOUNDATION; HIS MEN HAVE JUST NOT BEEN ACTIVE, PARTICULARLY IN TROUBLED TA PHRAYA DISTRICT. HE SAID HE WAS RELIABLE INFORMED BY LEADING ARANYAPRATHET POLICE OFFICER THAT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES THERE OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF DESERTION
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BY 24 KC AND FLIGHT INTO THAILAND DECEMBER 11, AND SUB-

SEQUENT APPEARANCE ON THAI TERRITORY OF LARGE KC FORCE SENT TO RETRIEVE THEM ON SAME DAY.

3. CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEPARTURE. FORMER PRIME MINISTER BELIEVES IT WAS A CAMBODIAN NAMED MIN VUTHAY WHO WAS IMMEDIATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM. THE SUBJECT IS A FORMER GKR POLICE OFFICIAL WHO WORKS WITH THAI INTELLIGENCE IN ARANYAPRATHET. IN TAM THINKS THAT THE CAMBODIANS DEMANDED HIS EXPULSION AT ONE OF THE REGULAR FRIDAY MEETINGS OF LIAISON OFFICE OFFICIALS, AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS LIKE PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI--DESIROUS OF MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE NEW CAMBODIAN REGIME--READILY AGREED. IN TAM SAID THE CID OFFICIAL WHO BROUGHT HIM TO BANGKOK DECEMBER 17 INFORMED HIM THAT HE HAD ALSO RECEIVED THE ORDER TWO DAYS EARLIER TO EXPEL GENERAL MOUL KHLENG, GENERAL SEK SEM IET, AND THE LATTER'S CLOSE ASSOCIATE, COLONEL MAU SONG (REF B).

4. CAMBODIA TODAY. ASKED WHETHER HE THINKS CAMBODIA IS BECOMING MORE SETTLED NOW, IN TAM REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE. FIRST, DESPITE A GENERALLY GOOD HARVEST IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE, HUNGER CONTINUES AS NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO KEEP ANY OF THE RICE HE PRODUCES, WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE PRODUCTION SENT IN THE DIRECTION OF PHNOM PENH (OTHER REFUGEE SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED THIS) AND THE REMAINDER DOLED OUT IN SMALL AMOUNTS BY THE KC FOR DAILY CONSUMPTION BY THE POPULATION. SECONDLY, THERE HAS BEEN NO LET-UP IN THE EXECUTIONS. THIRDLY, JOCKEYING FOR POWER CONTINUES AMONG THE FACTIONS OF KHIEU SAMPHAN, IENG SARY, AND THE ANTI-COMMUNISTS WHO FALL UNDER THE NAME "SIHANOUKISTS". IN HIS OPINION, THESE ARE ALL INDICES OF AN UNSETTLED STATE.

5. RESISTANCE. THE CAMBODIAN LEADER WAS RATHER GLOOMY ABOUT RESISTANCE. HE NOTED THAT A GROUP OF THIRTY PEOPLE, HEADED BY AN EX-COLONEL, HAD JUST ARRIVED IN THAILAND FROM THE BATTAMBANG AREA. THEY SAID THEY HAD PLACED THEMSELVES IN A WAY THAT WOULD PROVIDE MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE EFFORT THEY THOUGHT WAS SURE TO COME, GIVING UP AFTER SEVEN MONTHS OF WAITING. AS FOR THE CELEBRATED BROTHERS BUN SUONG AND BUN SANG AND THE LATTER'S FAMOUS COBRA ORGANIZATION (REF C),

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IN TAM HAD HEARD BOTH MOUL KHLENG'S STORY THAT THE KC OBSERVED THEM SEVERAL MONTHS AGO CROSSING THE TONLE SAP AND KILLED THEM AND MOST OF THEIR SUPPORTERS, AS WELL AS ONE CIRCULATING THAT BUN SUONG HAD ARRIVED IN TAPRIK, THAILAND (SOUTH OF ARANYAPRATHET) AND WAS LAST SEEN BEING BROUGHT TO BANGKOK. FINALLY, IN TAM REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT ON THE ACTIVITY STILL OCCURRING IN SOUTHWESTERN CAMBODIA SUPPOSEDLY LED BY GENERAL CHANTERANGSEY, EXCEPT TO ADMIT THAT THE TERRAIN IS IDEAL

FOR IT. (IN A PREVIOUS CONVERSATION IN SEPTEMBER, IN TAM
HAD EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT CHANTERANGSEY WAS DEAD.)

6. OTHER ACTIVITY. IN TAM NOTED THAT EVERY DAY TEN TO
FIFTEEN CAMBODIANS ARE PERMITTED TO LEAVE THE ARANYAPRATHET
REFUGEE CAMP WITH THE CONNIVANCE OF LOCAL POLICE TO RETURN
TO CAMBODIA, SOMETIMES TO SEEK OUT FRIENDS OR RELATIVES BUT
PARTICULARLY TO ASSIST CAMBODIANS IN LEAVING, FOR A PRICE
(OF WHICH THE THAI POLICE THEN GET A LARGE SHARE).

7. MOVEMENT OF POPULATION. IN TAM ESTIMATED THAT ALMOST A
MILLION FORMER PHNOM PENH RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN MOVED IN RECENT
MONTHS FROM THE AREA OF CAMBODIA WHERE THEY WERE TAKEN AFTER
THE EVACUATION OF THE CAPITAL, TO THE NORTHWEST. HE CITED
AS AN ILLUSTRATION THE CASE OF A FRIEND, A FORMER HIGH OFFICIAL,
WHO WAS SENT FROM PHNOM PENH TO FARM IN SOUTHEASTERN CAMBODIA
ON THE VIETNAMESE BORDER AND THEN IN SEPTEMBER RODE IN A CONVOY
OF FORTY TRUCKS TO A NEW LOCATION IN PURSAT. AT THIS POINT
IN TAM REFERRED TO A POLICY OF WHICH WE HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY
HEARD, THAT AS THESE PEOPLE MOVED IN TO HARVEST THE RICE,
MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO ORIGINALLY PLANTED IT WERE MOVED TO A
DIFFERENT REGION. COMMENT: IF TRUE, THIS POINTS TO JUST
HOW FAR THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL GO TO DEVELOP A ROOTLESS,
CLASSLESS SOCIETY. END COMMENT.

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8. FOREIGN PRESENCE. (IN TAM NOTED THAT A MONK ARRIVED IN ARANYAPRATHET DECEMBER 17 FROM SISOPHON, REPORTING THAT FIVE VIETNAMESE NOT BORN IN CAMBODIA ARE SERVING THERE AS GENERAL ADVISERS TO THE KC. IN TAM ADDED THAT, WITH RESPECT TO BATTAMBANG, HE UNDERSTANDS THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF CHINESE ADVISERS (RATHER THAN MORE VIETNAMESE, WHICH WE USUALLY HEAR) TRYING TO GET THE CITY OPERATING AGAIN. INDEED, HE SAID IT IS A PITY THAT CAMBODIA CANNOT BE AS INTELLIGENT AS VIET-NAM; WHEREAS THE LATTER DIVERSIFIES ITS LINKS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT, THE PRINCIPAL CAMBODIAN LINKS ARE WITH OLD ENEMY CHINA, WHICH TAKES A DOMINANT ROLE. THE KC ARE KILLING THE EDUCATED FROM THEIR OWN COUNTRY TO REPLACE THEM WITH CHINESE, HE ADDED.

9. THAILAND. IN TAM IS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THAILAND'S FUTURE. HE SEES THIS COUNTRY PASSING THROUGH A PERIOD SIMILAR TO CAMBODIA OF THE 1960'S WHEN THAT COUNTRY FIRST THREW OUT THE AMERICANS, THEN INVITED THEM BACK WHEN THE COMMUNIST SIDE BECAME TOO STRONG. BUT CAMBODIA TOOK THE LATTER ACTION TOO LATE IN THE GAME TO SAVE THE COUNTRY.

10. HIS OWN FUTURE. IN TAM INTENDS TO LOOK AROUND HIM
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AFTER ARRIVING IN FRANCE TO SEE IF THERE IS ANY ACTIVITY WITH RESPECT TO CAMBODIA WITH WHICH HE SHOULD ASSOCIATE. (HE HAS DENIED SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE IS A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN EXILE ANNOUNCED BY COLONEL SOUVATTHANA IN PARIS NOVEMBER 27--REF D.) HE COMMENTED THAT IT WILL BE IRONIC IF PRINCE SIHANOUK RETIRES TO HIS VILLA IN FRANCE (NEAR MOUGINS, IN ALPES MARITIMES), PLACING BOTH THE VICTORIOUS AND THE DEFEATED IN THE SAME POSITION.

11. COMMENT. WITH IN TAM'S DEPARTURE, THAILAND WILL LOSE THE MOST DISTINGUISHED, GRACIOUS, AND RESPECTED MEMBER OF ITS CAMBODIAN REFUGEE COMMUNITY. THE EMBASSY WILL SUBMIT COMMENTS ON THE STATUS OF THE PORTION OF IN TAM'S FAMILY REMAINING HERE BY SEPTEL.
WHITEHOUSE

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